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higher. Since the agents were remunerated on a 'piece rate basis', they were naturally interested in enlisting the largest possible number of people. One can well imagine that the recruiters made use of all sorts of glittering promises and also that they paid little attention to the character and abilities of the prospective Far Eastern colonists. The afore-mentioned Madame Khetagurova who exposed in a Moscow journal this 'recruitment racket', concluded her account laconically: 'And so it happened that quite a lot of scum was sent to the Far East'.[24]

Those consenting to go to the Far East as free workers received upon leaving Moscow or another city of European Russia a special bonus and a maintenance allowance covering the entire long journey from European Russia to their final place of destination. The total amount of bonuses and allowances thus earned might not have meant a great deal to a Western worker, but it was a considerable sum for the impoverished Soviet citizen of the 'thirties.' It was tempting and led to abuses. Quite a number of people cashed the special remuneration, went to the Far East, worked there for a while and got themselves discharged for reasons of health. Having returned to Moscow they let themselves be recruited once more for the Far East by another state trust and the whole game started again from the beginning.

The majority of the voluntary colonists who, up to the end of the Second Five-Year Plan, came to the Soviet Far East established themselves in towns. The two largest cities of the Soviet Far East, Vladivostok and Khabarovsk, therefore grew considerably. Between 1926 and 1939 the population of Khabarovsk increased from 52,000 to 199,000, and that of Vladivostok from 108,000 to 206,000.

As a consequence of the growth of the existing towns and the foundation of new ones such as Komsomolsk, Magadan and Birobidzhan City, the relation between the urban and rural population in the Far East changed to the detriment of the villages. In 1926 only 24 per cent of the population of the Far East lived in towns, but by 1939 over half of all 'Far Easterners' could be classified as 'urban'.

The encouragement of the urban population in the Far Eastern provinces led to neglect of agriculture. During the period of the First and Second Five-Year Plans the area under cultivation in the Soviet Far East diminished by over 20 per cent, from 2,848,000 acres in 1928 to 2,223,000 acres in 1938. Consequently, instead of providing more for the newcomers, the food supply for the Soviet Far East became more dependent on deliveries from areas thousands of miles away. This created an unsatisfactory situation not only from the narrow economic point of view but also from the military which demanded complete self-sufficiency in fuel, raw materials and food. Molotov himself proclaimed the principal of self-sufficiency for the Soviet Far East at the Eighteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party, in March 1939, and

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demanded, in particular, 'full liquidation' of all shortcomings in Far Eastern agriculture. The Third Five-Year Plan, therefore, aimed at an increase of the agricultural population of the Far East. About 100,000 new collective farmers were to settle down in the Khabarovsk Territory[25] alone.

The outbreak of the war prevented the full implementation of the resettlement plan, but it was, at least, successfully started. Russian peasants went to the Far East mainly from the Provinces of Kursk, Oryol, Voronezh, Ryazan, Stalingrad, Tambov and Penza. Kursk and Oryol seem to have led the migration movement. There was a great deal of propaganda for the resettlement plan and during a certain period almost every single issue of the Moscow newspapers carried a news-item showing how well those farmers had fared who had consented to go to the Far East, and how heartily they had been received there by the old-timers. The big All-Union Agricultural Exhibition which was opened in Moscow on the eve of the Second World War was likewise put into the service of the resettlement campaign. The Far Eastern pavilion of the exhibition illustrated, with the help of statistics and pictures, all the delights of peasant life east of Lake Baikal. In addition, the pavilion served as a convenient place for officially organized meetings at which collective farmers of the Chita Province, and the Khabarovsk and Maritime Territories talked to peasants of European Russia about the advantages of Far Eastern agriculture.[26] These propaganda efforts were not in vain. In fact, the resettlement plan for 1940 was already fulfilled by October of that year,[27] and numerous peasant settlers also went to the Far East in the first half of 1941, continuing to do so almost until the Hitlerite invasion of the Soviet Union.

Peasant colonization in the Far East was resumed after the war. Its precise extent is not known. Official Soviet sources have shrouded it in mystery and apparently consider it a military secret. In the absence of reliable statistics a rough, and not necessarily accurate, estimate about the increase in the population of the Soviet Far East can only be made by a comparison of the numbers of constituencies which were created for the elections of 1937, 1946 and 1950. There was hardly any change between 1937 and 1946. For the Supreme Soviet elections in 1937 the F.E.T. was subdivided into nine constituencies, each of them representing a theoretical population of 300,000. The total population of the Far East in the narrower sense (including Sakhalin) was, thus, 2,700,000. In 1946 the Khabarovsk and Maritime Territories comprised nine constituencies on the Asiatic mainland, whilst a tenth constituency was formed by Sakhalin and the Kurile archipelago. The total population of the Soviet Far East at the beginning of 1946 could, therefore, hardly have exceeded 2,700,000 on the Asiatic continent or 3,000,000, including the Soviet island possessions in the Pacific.